



CITY OF TACOMA SUSTAINABLE TACOMA COMMISSION MEETING NOTES

Date: December 8, 2015

Commission Members Present: Sarah Chessman, Chrissy Cooley, Phil Coughlan, Nick Cutting, Felicity Devlin, Rus Higley, Peter Hickman, Alyssa Illich, Ellen Moore, Agnes Pate

Commission Members Excused: Jeff Bessmer

Others Present: Emily Campbell, Kristin Lynett, Lowell Wyse, Lisa Rennie, Jetta Antonakos

- **Roll Call**

- **Approval of November 10, 2015 Meeting Notes**

The November notes were approved with no changes.

- **Review of December Agenda**

The December agenda was approved. Later, Item IX (Public Comment on Disposable Bags) was moved ahead to "Subcommittee Report-Outs" for continuity with the discussion from the Reusable Bag Subcommittee.

- **Environmental Action Plan Review**

- The public meeting occurred December 7th. Gathering feedback and having dialogue about the potential actions for the new plan.
- The Commissioners provided feedback on the public meeting process. One suggestion was to have scribes to write down the verbal comments. Lots of people were interested in targets, which have yet to be determined. One potential sticking point is the request from IPS to prioritize the potential actions. It was unclear to some participants how the plan would be used. Yes or no was a stark choice, whereas a scale would have allowed for more prioritization by the residents in the process. There was a lot of information to take in, so that could have been a barrier for people trying to learn a lot in a short time.
- Commissioners need to work to widely distribute the EAP survey to ensure a higher quantity of feedback. The full release of the website is scheduled for tomorrow. Commissioners are welcome to comment on the site content until then. The website is: <http://tacomaeap.publicmeeting.info/>. The survey should take about 10 minutes, and there is space for leaving comments as well.
- Staff and consultants worked to comb through existing plans to make this a usable document and not a feel-good plan that isn't used.
- The EnviroNews listserv should be a good avenue for reaching out to interested residents.
- Lisa Rennie expressed a concern for items that involve new budget allocations from TPU. She added that there is little context for people to make informed decisions.

- Chrissy will spread the word through Puyallup Watershed Initiative. Commissioners will post on select neighborhood council Facebook pages or pass info to Kristi for sharing. Consider asking Exit 133 to post a link. Ask the universities who hosted Climate Conversations to share with their networks. It might make sense to share with college professors as well. The website has translation capabilities for multiple languages.
- Casey Cowles offered a public comment that business districts would be a good place to post.
- Another meeting guest offered a comment about the methanol plant and asked the STC to address the issue.

- **Potential Topics for 2016 Work Plan**

- Ellen raised a concern that there may not be sufficient time for public comment on the proposed methanol plant because there is a proposed 30-day period for the entirety of scoping, a period which would end in January. The decision on the scoping period could be made as soon as this Friday. There was discussion about the Commission's ability to write a letter to IPS on short notice (this week). The City has agreed to be the lead agency and has created an informational web page.
- A motion passed to take an item off the table from a previous meeting - the potential invitation of NW Innovation Works and Sightline Institution to present to the Commission. A motion carried to invite Ian Munce, the City lead for the project, to the January meeting to present on the proposed methanol plant and the timeline for public comment.
- Kristi clarified that the Tacoma Water work plan item referred to potential conservation actions at the utility. STC is scheduled to present its work plan at the IPS meeting in late February.
- Additions to the list of potential work plan topics included Green Buildings, follow-up to the Climate Resiliency Study and Urban Forestry. The disposable bags item was amended to include other plastics as well.
- There was a question about the timeliness with which items get added to the Commission's agenda. Evaluation of this was added as an item to the 2016 work plan topics.

- **Subcommittee Report-Outs**

- Reusable Bags Subcommittee

- Note: This subcommittee was moved to the top to accommodate the desire for public comment.

- The Commission has been working on the issue for several years. It has sent a letter to Council recommending the "Bellingham Model."

- **Public Comment on Disposable Bags**

- Casey Cowles of Minuteman Press and board member for 6th Avenue Business District - Admires the work of the STC, but has a fundamental problem with enacting a social change via tax dollars. Opposes focusing on the bags issue when it's a small part of the waste stream. Doesn't like plastic bags, but sees it as a social choice. Concerned about it being a tax on the poor. Opposes "single-use" terminology for bags because he does lots of things with them after shopping. Doesn't think a ban would be effective, nor a good use of City resources. Requests outreach to the business community on the issue. Kristi clarified that outreach has been done to all Tacoma businesses, as well as neighborhood councils and business districts.
- Claudia Riedener - Mentioned a 2009 B&O tax exemption for the News Tribune for bags that are wrapped around advertisements and newspapers. Estimated 7,000 plastic bundles distributed each week. Requested that these types of bags be included in a potential ban.
- David Korn - Concerned about sea level rise, has been meeting with City and County staff to lay groundwork for his comment today. Record rains around the world. Recognizing sea level rise as a national emergency. Where in the plan is the likelihood of rising oceans?
- John Carlton - Concerned for Puget Sound and the waste that impacts it. People are throwing plastic bags in the street and the issue has to be addressed.
- Michael Johnson of Polybag LLC in South Tacoma - Appreciates what the Commission does. Sees plastic bags as "low-hanging fruit" that the City is reaching for. Concerned about commerce displacement—people going outside the district where bags are sold. Sees plastic bags as the best choice from a life cycle standpoint. Claims that most reusable bags are made from foreign oil

and are not more environmentally friendly. Claims that we don't have a plastic bag problem in Tacoma and that some cities have overturned their plastic bag bans.

- Bliss Moore, Sierra Club volunteer and former STC member - Expressed support for a bag ordinance similar to the Bellingham model. Says reusable bags can be used from natural products that decompose; that bags are a small piece of the waste stream but a major piece that will be in the environment forever. Says many jurisdictions have banned bags, urged the City to move ahead. Says the NW Grocers Association supports statewide action on the issue.
- Ken Campbell, former STC member and former board member of Surfrider - States that in four years, about 400 million plastic bags have been dispensed by Tacoma grocery stores; plastic bags are a big part of waste pollution in the oceans, something that consumers touch every day. It is a small portion of the waste stream but has huge effects on the environment. The NW Grocers Association will support the ordinance if it is based on the Bellingham model.
 - Nick clarified that STC members are unpaid, uncompensated volunteers and that the Commission's role is not to enact legislation, but to present information to City Council on environmental issues.
 - Kristi clarified that the survey will be open for five more weeks and 1,300 responses have already come through. Results will be shared with City Council subcommittees as soon as February 2016.

- **Subcommittee Report-Outs (Cont'd)**

- Electric Vehicles

- Alyssa is doing research about other cities plans to implement more street-side charging stations as well as rentals for tourists.

- Green Building

- The subcommittee has plans to go to the Planning Department to discuss green building measures.

- Outreach

- There will be an opportunity for this subcommittee to assist with outreach on the 2016 South Sound Sustainability Expo.

- Possible Decisions on Disposable Bag Letter to Council

- A motion passed to send the draft letter to Council.

- **Discussion and Possible Action of Nomination of Councilman Mello for EPA Committee**

- A motion passed to send a letter nominating Councilman Ryan Mello for an EPA committee.

- **Staff Updates**

- An AmeriCorps member is being recruited to serve at the EnviroHouse.
 - Jetta was pleased at the feedback at the EAP public meeting, particularly with awareness of food waste issues.

- **Other Public Comment**

- There was no additional public comment.

- **Objectives for Next Meeting**

- Feedback on Environmental Action Plan draft targets.
 - Presentation(s) on proposed methanol plant.
 - Further workshopping of the disposable bag ordinance letter.
 - Any Commissioner whose term is expiring in 2016 and does not intend to renew membership should let the Commission know by January.

- **Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

The next meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be Tuesday, January 12, 2016, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., Tacoma Municipal Building, 747 Market Street, 9th Floor Visibility Center.